Strange hadron production in O+O collisions at $\sqrt{s_{\rm NN}} = 200$ GeV at STAR

Iris Ponce (Yale) for the STAR Collaboration

Strangeness enhancement was the first predicted observable as evidence of the formation of a Quark-Gluon Plasma (QGP) in the 1980s. Since then results from high energy collisions of asymmetric small systems (p+Au, p+Pb, etc.), such as flow and enhancement of strangeness production, have generated significant discussions in the field about the initial conditions, including the size of the system, needed to generate a QGP. A smooth increase in the ratio of strange hadron production to the pion yield as a function of multiplicity has been found in various collision systems (p+p, p+A, A+A). In 2021, STAR collected large datasets during $\sqrt{s_{\rm NN}} = 200$ GeV O+O collisions at RHIC, a unique symmetric small collision system which allows a more straightforward geometry mapping with centrality than those asymmetric small system collisions like He+Au, d+Au, or p+Au. This talk will focus on the first measurements of bulk strange hadron ($\Lambda, \overline{\Lambda}, \Xi, \overline{\Xi}, \Omega, \overline{\Omega}$) production in $\sqrt{s_{\rm NN}} = 200$ GeV O+O collisions. With the high statistics of the dataset and the extended kinematic coverage benefit from the iTPC upgrade, we can investigate the dependence of strangeness production in O+O on transverse momentum, centrality, and rapidity.